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DE RUEHRL #1497 3280925
ZNR UUUUU ZZH (CCY ADDF623C MSI3597-695)
R 240925Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5883
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHVJ/AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO 0061
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0897
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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SUBJECT: GERMANY FAVORS MAINTAINING EUFOR TROOP LEVELS

REF: 118244

¶1. (SBU) Poloff delivered reftel demarche to MFA Deputy Director for the Balkans Marc Bogdahn on November 18 and had a follow-on conversation with MFA Bosnia desk officer Michael Geisler on November 20. Geisler -- who had just returned from the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) meeting in Sarajevo -- assured us that Germany would maintain its current level of troops (about 130) in EUFOR ALTHEA. Moreover, he said that German officials had impressed upon new FM Westerwelle and new DefMin zu Guttenberg the importance of keeping EUFOR troops in Bosnia.

¶2. (SBU) However, Geisler emphasized that the EU as a whole had made no decision yet on the future of ALTHEA. He said Germany has been engaged bilaterally with EU partners to discourage the unilateral withdrawal of troops from Bosnia. However, it was too early to gauge whether these efforts would be successful. Geisler underscored Germany's position that the EUFOR mandate should continue to be extended until the closure of the Office of the High Representative (OHR).
MURPHY